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## *Reward Offered*

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THURSDAY, July 6, 2000**

PR 63 00

*CONTACTS:* [Mike Berg](#), BPA (503) 230-4274

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**MISSOULA, Mont.** – The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of vandals who destroyed equipment on a BPA high voltage transmission line.

On June 23, vandals destroyed 15 of 18 critical insulators on one of BPA's 500,000-volt transmission lines near Deep Creek, Mont. Last fall the Missoula area had similar problems with gun shot vandalism. No one was been arrested in those cases. Electricity ratepayers will bear the \$5,000 cost of this incident if no one is apprehended.

Fortunately, BPA was able to reroute power flows, so there was no interruption of electrical service to any customer.

"Anytime this kind of incident occurs, whether it causes a power outage or not, it is costly and dangerous," said Mike Berg, BPA security specialist. "Every one of these incidents has an impact on BPA's rates. That's why we really like to catch those responsible so they can pay for the damage instead of our ratepayers. Downed power lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages that can kill or seriously injure the vandals themselves, as well as other people."

The inherent fire hazard of these incidents is of special concern during dry, hot summer weather in areas where there are trees and brush. Thus, a single mindless act of vandalism can interrupt electrical service to thousands, cause extensive property damage, jeopardize essential services, pose an electrocution hazard, and cause a forest fire, Berg said.

Since 1994, BPA's Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of tips resulting in dozens of arrests and thousands of dollars of recovered property, and most important, deterrence of future crime. In 1999, a total of 249 insulator units were replaced, representing an 86 percent decrease from the historic average of 1,723 units replaced each year prior to the institution of the program. Cumulative savings since the program began total more than \$3,000,000. Informants can call toll free at **1-800-437-2744**. The identity of informants is kept confidential.

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